

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 0523

ALEXANDRIA FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY (ATHERTON)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, US

SUBJECT: CODEL FINDLEY

1. CONGRESSMAN PAUL FINDLEY (REP ILL) HAS JUST FINISHED AN APPROXIMATELY 24-HOURS VISIT TO DAMASCUS ARRIVING EVENING APRIL 30 AND DEPARTING AFTERNOON MAY 1. DURING HIS SHORT VISIT HE CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER KHAKKAM AND MEMBERS OF THE SYRIAN PARLIAMENT'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE. IN ADDITION FOLLOWING CONGRESSMAN FINDLEY'S LOW-KEY REQUEST OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER HE WAS ALSO RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT ASAD FOR AN UNSCHEDULED MEETING WHICH LASTED ABOUT AHALF AN HOUR AFTERNOON OF MAY 1.

2. DURING HIS VARIOUS TALKS, CONGRESSMAN FINDLEY EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR CLOSER CONTACTS BETWEEN THE SYRIAN AND AMERICAN PEOPLES AND PARTICULARLY OFFICIALS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO STATES. HE ALSO EXPRESSED ADMIRATION AND SUPPORT FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER'S EFFORTS NOTING, HOWEVER, THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER IS NOT ABLE TO WORK IN A VOID BUT HAS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT PUBLIC OPINION, ESPECIALLY AS THIS IS EXPRESSED THROUGH THE CONGRESS. FOR THIS REASON HE HOPED THAT SYRIA WOULD DO MORE IN EXPLAINING ITS VIEWS AND POSITIONS TO THE US
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SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES INCLUDING THOSE WHO

MAY NOT HAPPEN TO UNDERSTAND OR EVEN AGREE WITH THE ARAB POINT OF VIEW. HE RECOMMENDED THAT MORE US CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS BE INVITED TO SYRIA AND THAT SYRIAN DEPUTIES ALSO VISIT WASHINGTON. CONGRESSMAN FINDLEY ALSO UNDERSCORED THE NEED FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES.

3. BOTH PRESIDENT ASAD AND FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM AGREED WITH CONGRESSMAN'S RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT NEED FOR CLOSER CONTACTS. PRESIDENT ASAD NOTED SOMEWHAT RUEFULLY THAT POSSIBLY SYRIANS HAVE NOT BEEN AS ACTIVE IN THE PAST IN THIS REGARD AS THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN. THE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ASAD WAS PARTICULARLY RELAXED AND WARM WITH THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSING HIS GENERAL HOPE AS WELL AS OPTIMISM THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SYRIA ARE IMPROVING. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT FURTHER EFFORTS ARE STILL REQUIRED. PRESIDENT ASAD GAVE "MANDATE" TO CONGRESSMAN FINDLEY TO INFORM HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE HOUSE AS WELL AS THE SENATE THAT THEY ARE ALL WELCOME TO SYRIA AND THAT THE PRESIDENT HOPES THAT THEY WILL COME TO SEE FOR THEMSELVES THAT SYRIA ONLY WANTS: (A) A JUST PEACE INVOLVING ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AS WELL AS RECOGNITION OF JUST RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS AND (B) GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES.

4. FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM SPENT MOST OF THE MEETING LECURING, ALBEIT IN RESTRAINED MANNER, CONGRESSMAN FINDLEY ON THE OVER-ALL SYRIAN POSITION. HE TOOK THE SAME LINE AS THE PRESIDENT BUT EXPATIATED ON IT AT GREATER LENGTH NOTING, INTER ALIA, (A) NEFARIOUS ZIONIST INFLUENCE IN THE US OVER THE YEARS, (B) INORDINATE SUPPORT OF ISRAEL BY UNITED STATES IN CONTRADICTION TO BASIC US INTERESTS IN THE AREA, (C) INDEPENDENCE OF SYRIA FROM BOTH THE WESTERN AND EASTERN BLOCS, (D) GENUINE ADMIRATION FOR UNITED STATES IN SPITE OF NEGATIVE US POLICY TOWARDS SYRIA AND ARABS OVER THE LAST 25 YEARS.

5. CONGRESSMAN FINDLEY'S SESSION WITH THE SYRIAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE COVERED PRETTY MUCH THE SAME GROUND WITH BOTH SIDES AGREEING AGAIN ON THE NEED FOR GREATER CONFIDENTIAL

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CONTACTS AND BOTH SIDES INVITING MEMBERS OF THEIR RESPECTIVE HOUSES TO VISIT THEIR COUNTRIES IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

6. AT HIS REQUEST I ACCOMPANIED CONGRESSMAN FINDLEY ON ALL HIS CALLS AND I BELIEVE THAT HE IMPRESSED THOSE HE MET WITH HIS SINCERITY AND GENUINE INTEREST IN IMPROVEMENT OF UNITED STATES AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE ARAB SYRIAN RELATIONS ISRAELI PROBLEM. THE FACT THAT PRESIDENT

ASAD DECIDED TO MEET HIM AT THE LAST MOMENT,I BELIEVE,
IS AN INDICATION OF THE POSITIVE IMPACT THAT CONGRESSMAN
FINDLEY'S VISIT HAD ON THE FOREIGN MINISTER WHOM HE MET EARLIER
THAT MORNING. IF I AM NOT MISTAKEN, CONGRESSMAN FINDLEY'S
VISIT IS THE FIRST TO DAMASCUS OF A US CONGRESSMAN SINCE
1967. SENATOR ABOURIZZIK, OF COURSE, WAS HERE IN
DECEMBER 1973.
SCOTES

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